

AMENDMENT

Please amend the application without prejudice, without admission, without surrender of subject matter, and without any intention of creating any estoppel as to equivalents as follows.

In the Claims:

1-90. (Cancelled).

91. (Currently Amended) A method for the rapid detection of an anti-WNV antibody comprising the steps of:

(a) contacting a biological sample with a microsphere suspension, each microsphere ~~coupled~~ covalently attached via its carboxylated surface to a substantially pure WNV NS5 protein having a native conformation or non-denatured structure whereby each NS5 protein is specifically reactive to antibodies against WNV,

(b) incubating the microsphere suspension under conditions sufficient to promote the binding of an anti-WNV antibody to the NS5 protein,

(c) contacting the microsphere suspension with a detection reagent capable of detecting the anti-WNV antibody,

(d) detecting the detection reagent,
wherein detection of the detection reagent indicates the presence the anti-WNV antibody in the biological sample.

92. (Original) The method according to claim 91, wherein the biological sample is selected from the group consisting of bodily fluid, blood, serum, plasma, saliva, tears, feces, semen, mucous, tissue, tissue homogenate, cellular extract, and spinal fluid.

93. (Original) The method according to claim 92, wherein the biological sample is 10-20 microliters.

94. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 91, wherein the step of incubating the microsphere suspension is performed under conditions sufficient to enhance reaction kinetics, wherein the conditions comprise incubating at 37°C, for about 30 minutes while keeping the microsphere suspension in motion.

95. (Original) The method according to claim 91, wherein the detection reagent comprises a antibody coupled to a fluorescent tag.

96. (Original) The method according to claim 91, wherein the detection reagent comprises a antibody coupled to an enzyme.
97. (Original) The method according to claim 96, wherein the enzyme is selected from the group consisting of an oxidase, luciferase, peptidase, protease, glycosidase and phosphatase.
98. (Original) The method according to claims 95, wherein step (d) comprises the step of immunofluorescence detection of said fluorescent tag of said antibody of said detection reagent.
99. (Currently Amended) A method for detecting a WNV infection in a biological specimen comprising the steps of:
- (a) obtaining a suspension of microspheres each ~~coupled~~ covalently attached via its carboxylated surface to a substantially pure WNV NS5 protein having a native conformation or non-denatured structure wherein the WNV NS5 protein is specifically reactive with anti-WNV antibodies;
 - (b) performing a microsphere immunoassay;
 - (c) obtaining a result indicating either the presence or absence of an anti-WNV antibody;
- wherein the presence of an anti-WNV antibody indicates a WNV infection.
100. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 99, wherein the microsphere immunoassay is a Luminex-based test or flow cytometer-based test.
101. (Original) The method according to claim 99, wherein the microsphere immunoassay is a lateral flow test.
102. (Original) The method according to claim 99, wherein the microsphere immunoassay is an agglutination test.
103. (Original) The method according to claim 99, wherein the microsphere immunoassay is a strip test.
104. (Original) The method according to claim 99, wherein the microsphere immunoassay is automated.
105. (Currently Amended) A method for the transfer of information comprising the steps of:

- (a) carrying out the method of any of claims ~~74, 75, 80, 91, or 99~~ 91 or 99 to obtain a result;
 - (b) providing the result to a third party.
- 106-144. (Cancelled).
145. (Currently Amended) A method for rapid detection of a WNV infection in an animal susceptible of infection by said WNV, comprising the steps of:
- (a) contacting a biological sample of said animal comprising anti-WNV antibodies with a microsphere suspension, each microsphere ~~coupled~~ covalently attached via its carboxylated surface to a substantially pure WNV NS5 protein having a native conformation or non-denatured structure whereby each WNV NS5 protein is reactive to said anti-WNV antibodies,
 - (b) incubating the microsphere suspension under conditions sufficient to promote the binding of said anti-WNV antibodies to the WNV NS5 protein,
 - (c) contacting the microsphere suspension with a detection reagent capable of detecting the anti-WNV antibody,
 - (d) detecting the detection reagent,
- wherein detection of the detection reagent indicates the presence of said anti-WNV antibody in said biological sample.
- 146-155. (Cancelled).
156. (Currently Amended) A method for immunochromatographically testing for a WNV infection in an animal susceptible to said infection, comprising the steps of:
- (a) contacting a biological sample comprising anti-WNV antibodies with a suspension of WNV NS5-coated microspheres, wherein each microsphere is covalently attached via its carboxylated surface to a substantially pure WNV NS5 protein to form a reaction mixture under conditions sufficient to promote binding of the anti-WNV antibodies to the WNV NS5-coated microspheres,
 - (b) placing the reaction mixture at the proximal end of the membrane strip having a proximal end, a distal end, and a plurality of zones each comprising secondary antibodies coupled thereto,

(c) incubating the membrane strip under sufficient conditions to promote the movement of the reaction mixture towards the distal end, said conditions being also sufficient to promote the binding of the microparticles to said secondary antibodies coupled to the membrane strip vis-à-vis interactions between said secondary antibodies and the anti-WNV antibodies,

(d) washing from the membrane strip any unbound microparticles, and

(e) detecting bound microparticles, wherein bound microparticles indicates a WNV infection in said animal.

157-170. (Cancelled).

171. (Previously Presented) The method for the rapid detection of an anti-WNV antibody according to claim 91, wherein the method is performed as a microsphere immunoassay, an agglutination assay, a slide test, a lateral flow test, an immunochromatographic assay, a fluorescence-based assay, a flow cytometric-based assay, or a Luminex-based assay.
172. (Previously Presented) The method for the rapid detection of an anti-WNV antibody according to claim 171, wherein the method is performed in less than about 3 hours.
173. (Previously Presented) The method for the rapid detection of an anti-WNV antibody according to claim 91, wherein the biological sample is from an animal, a human, a bird, a wild bird, a horse, a mouse, a cat, or a dog.
174. (Previously Presented) The method for the rapid detection of an anti-WNV antibody according to claim 91, wherein the WNV NS5 protein is SEQ ID NO. 8 or is encoded by nucleic acid positions 7,633-10,377 of SEQ ID NO. 1.
175. (Previously Presented) The method for the rapid detection of an anti-WNV antibody according to claim 91, wherein the WNV NS5 protein is an immunogenic fragment thereof.
176. (Previously Presented) The method for detecting a WNV infection according to claim 99, wherein the method is performed as a microsphere immunoassay, an agglutination assay, a slide test, a lateral flow test, an immunochromatographic assay, a fluorescence-based assay, a flow cytometric-based assay, or a Luminex-based assay.
177. (Previously Presented) The method for detecting a WNV infection according to claim 176, wherein the method is performed in less than about 3 hours.

178. (Previously Presented) The method for detecting a WNV infection according to claim 99, wherein the biological sample is selected from the group consisting of bodily fluid, blood, serum, plasma, saliva, tears, feces, semen, mucous, tissue, tissue homogenate, cellular extract, and spinal fluid.
179. (Previously Presented) The method for detecting a WNV infection according to claim 99, wherein the biological sample is from an animal, a human, a bird, a wild bird, a horse, a mouse, a cat, or a dog.
180. (Previously Presented) The method for detecting a WNV infection according to claim 99, wherein the WNV NS5 protein is SEQ ID NO. 8 or is encoded by nucleic acid positions 7,633-10,377 of SEQ ID NO. 1.
181. (Previously Presented) The method for detecting a WNV infection according to claim 99, wherein the WNV NS5 protein is an immunogenic fragment thereof.
- 182-192. (Cancelled)
193. (Previously Presented) The method for the rapid detection of WNV infection according to claim 145, wherein the method is performed as a microsphere immunoassay, an agglutination assay, a slide test, a lateral flow test, an immunochromatographic assay, a fluorescence-based assay, a flow cytometric-based assay, or a Luminex-based assay.
194. (Previously Presented) The method for the rapid detection of a WNV infection according to claim 145, wherein the method is performed in less than about 3 hours.
195. (Previously Presented) The method for the rapid detection of a WNV infection according to claim 145, wherein the biological sample is selected from the group consisting of bodily fluid, blood, serum, plasma, saliva, tears, feces, semen, mucous, tissue, tissue homogenate, cellular extract, and spinal fluid.
196. (Previously Presented) The method for the rapid detection of a WNV infection according to claim 145, wherein the biological sample is from an animal, a human, a bird, a wild bird, a horse, a mouse, a cat, or a dog.
197. (Previously Presented) The method for the rapid detection of a WNV infection according to claim 145, wherein the WNV NS5 protein is SEQ ID NO. 8 or is encoded by nucleic acid positions 7,633-10,377 of SEQ ID NO. 1.

198. (Previously presented) The method for the rapid detection of WNV infection according to claim 145, wherein the WNV NS5 protein is a fusion protein.
199. (Previously presented) The method for the rapid detection of a WNV infection according to claim 145, wherein the WNV NS5 protein is an immunogenic fragment thereof.
200. (Previously presented) The method for the rapid detection of a WNV infection according to claim 198, wherein said fusion protein comprises a maltose binding protein or thioredoxin and WNV NS5.
201. (Previously Presented) The method for immunochromatographically testing for a WNV infection according to claim 156, wherein the WNV NS5 protein is SEQ ID NO. 8 or is encoded by nucleic acid positions 7,633-10,377 of SEQ ID NO. 1.
202. (Previously presented) The method for immunochromatographically testing for a WNV infection according to claim 156, wherein the method is performed in less than about 3 hours.